in order to encourage more utilisation of gas and some projects were also taken up. But I am surprised and shocked to see that none of the projects had found place in the hon. Prime Minister's special package. Have you revised the price or are you thinking of increasing the price of the gas produced in North-East because of location and other things ?

Hon. Speaker also knows about it. He had a role to play when he was in the Ministry of Industries. In face some of the projects came up during his time. After that nothing has come up. What is the reason ? What is your thinking about it ?

MR. SPEAKER : I do not think the hon. Minister would have the information about it.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : As far as the pipeline is concerned, the State of Tripura wants to give it to Bangladesh and Bangladesh wants to give it to Calcutta. Nothing happens in North-East. All sympathies are only on paper.

[Translation]

SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA : Mr. Sepaker, Sir, it is not only gas but other petroleum products are also available in the North East. A group of the workers of ONGC and Oil India have emerged whom I do not consider bad men. The State Government has to be paid royalty. They demand royalty separately for their area and the officers posted there come back in a scared way as there is no security set up for them. Due to these crisis, there is no improvement and expansion of work there. We did ask our officers too as to whether any arrangement can be made for it. At this they replied that they need state Government's help in this matter. State Governments spend less for the development of roads, schools, hospitals and other facilities at the place where gas or petroleum is extracted. So, they demand royalty separately. This is the biggest problem due to which there is difficulty in starting a new project.

[English]

Prices of Natural Gas

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*265. SHRI NITISH KUMAR :
SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS :

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have drawn up a proposal to mobilise additional resources to the tune of Rs. 250 crore each year by raising the prices of natural gas;

(b) if so, the extent to which the prices of natural gas are likely to be increased;

(c) whether the Government have estimated the production cost of natural gas;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) the percentage of profit on the exisitng sale price; and

(f) the proposed percentage of profit in future ?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI JNANESHWAR MISHRA) : (a) to (d) and (f) The Government has appointed a Committee to go into the question of revision of the prices of natural gas. The Committee has submitted its report and the same is under consideration of the Government.

(e) The producer prices of the natural gas had been fixed in January, 1992 at Rs. 1500 per thousand cubic meters. This price was fixed taking into account the prevailing cost of production and after providing 15% post tax return on the equity of the producer. The producer price of the gas has not been revised since then.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government does not reply any question in a categorical way. All news is published in the newspapers through Government sources but when any question is raised in the Parliament, the Government gives an evasive reply. A news has been published in the newspapers that the Government is going to revise the price of natural gas to have an additional income of Rs. 250 crore. But they have mentioned about a Committee here and stated that the Committee has submitted its recommendations. When did the Committee submit its recommendations to you and by when you will take a decision on it ?

Second point is that when a point about cost of production is raised, the Government tells about producers' lose. Let us know about cost of production and let us know how much subsidy you have to pay and how much revenue loss is being suffered by the Government. The public should be told this clearly. Let me know plainly what is you production cost and how much subsidy you are paying thereon, How much loss the Government has been suffering and what steps you want to take to make up that loss ? This was the sole target of mine to be aware of this fact. This is my question. Please reply it, you are giving an evasive reply that it is under consideration.

SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA : At the outset I had stated that price fixation was done in 1992 and since then the same is going on. In between the Governemnt had constituted Shankar Committee. The report of that Committee has also been submitted with our office some 15-20 days back and now it has to be sent before the Cabinet. If we discusss this issue before that, then a signal will go that either the prices will come down or increase or will remain stable. Therefore, our officers have given in writing that this report was submitted in the month of December, 1996. Since then it has been under consideration. It is being considered as to what should be done. This is not such kind of matter to be taken up in a rash way. If prices go up, there is effect of it on the common masses. Let it be studied in a careful way. Such rashness is not good.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Let me know the reply of the question which I want to put up as to what is the cost of production as on date ? At present, you might have calculated something. Report has been pending for consideration since December, 1996 and seven months have elapsed. Let me know about it. Prices have been hiked or not but information to this effect should be given so that it could be conveyed to the people.

12.00 hrs.

SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, this point is still being looked into as to what is the cost of production of natural gas in the country as on date. I shall intimate the hon'ble Member in this regard.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Civil Aviation Policy

*266. SHRI T. GOPAL KRISHNA :
SHRI SURESH PRABHU :

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether a new comprehensive Civil Aviation Policy including laying of guidelines for all future Private Sector investments in airport projects is under consideration of the Government;

(b) if so, the salient features thereof;

(c) the reasons for making the changes in the existing Civil Aviation Policy;

(d) the time by which the new policy is likely to be announced;

(e) whether experts from various organisations have also been consulted in this regard;

(f) if so, the details thereof;

(g) whether many opposition parties have opposed the proposed changes in the Civil Aviation Policy;

(h) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(i) the extent to which the new policy is likely to be beneficial to the country;

(j) whether it is also proposed to allow 100 percent private participation in some airport projects; and

(k) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN) : (a) to (k) Yes, Sir. There is a proposal to frame a comprehensive National Policy on Civil Aviation, encompassing all aspects. The Policy is being formulated in consultation with the representatives of airlines – both Public and Private, Airports Authority of India, Confederation of Indian Industry and experts in the field of Aviation. It will protect the national interest in all respects. There is no proposal to change foreign equity participation in the domestic air transport policy already approved by the Government. The policy is likely to be finalised within 3 months. Details of the policy can only be given at that stage.

[Translation]

Expansion of Major Ports

*267. SHRI D.P. YADAV : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have formulated any schemes for expansion of Tuticorin, Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai port trusts;

(b) if so, the details thereof together with the total expenditure likely to be incurred on these schemes; and

(c) the likely increase in the Government's revenue after expansion of these port trusts ?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The details of expenditure likely to be incurred during 1997-98 on the schemes for expansion of these Major Ports are as under:-